APPENDIX (Amended Material)

1. Apparatus comprising:

a sterilization tunnel for surrounding a plurality of containers with pressurized gas; and

[at least one partition forming] a plurality of zones within [a] the sterilization tunnel having different sterilant concentration levels introduced therein wherein the sterilant concentration levels vary by at least a ratio of .1 ppm / .5 ppm.

3. Apparatus comprising:

a sterilization tunnel for surrounding a plurality of containers with pressurized gas;

a sterilant supply source to supply sterilant into the sterilization tunnel;

a control system, operatively attached to a plurality of sterilant concentration zones within the sterilization tunnel, for automatically adjusting the operational parameters of the tunnel, wherein the sterilant concentration levels vary by at least a ratio of .1 ppm / .5 ppm;

at least one gas supply source to supply the pressurized gas into the sterilization tunnel; and

at least one gas exit to allow the pressurized gas to escape the sterilization tunnel.

5. The apparatus of claim 3, further comprising at least one partition forming [a] the plurality of sterilant concentration zones within the sterilization tunnel.

17. Apparatus comprising:

a sterilization tunnel for surrounding a plurality of containers with pressurized gas;

a sterilant supply source to supply sterilant into the sterilization tunnel;

a plurality of zones having a plurality of gas nozzles within the sterilization tunnel;

at least one partition forming a plurality of sterilant concentration zones within the sterilization tunnel wherein the sterilant concentration levels vary by at least a ratio of .1 ppm / .5 ppm;

at least one gas supply source to supply the pressurized gas into the sterilization tunnel; and

at least one gas exit to allow the pressurized gas to escape the sterilization tunnel.

33. A method comprising:

providing a sterilization tunnel for surrounding a plurality of containers with pressurized gas;

introducing sterilant from a sterilant supply source into the sterilization tunnel;

providing a plurality of sterilant concentration zones within the sterilization tunnel wherein the sterilant concentration levels vary by at least a ratio of .1 ppm / .5 ppm;

providing at least one partition for forming said sterilant concentration zones;

introducing pressurized gas from at least one gas supply source into the sterilization tunnel; and

allowing the pressurized gas to escape the sterilization tunnel.

38. Apparatus comprising:

means for providing a plurality of containers in a sterilization tunnel;

means for providing a plurality of sterilant concentration zones within the sterilization tunnel wherein the sterilant concentration levels vary by at least a ratio of .1 ppm / .5 ppm; and

means for providing a plurality of gas flow rates within the sterilization tunnel.